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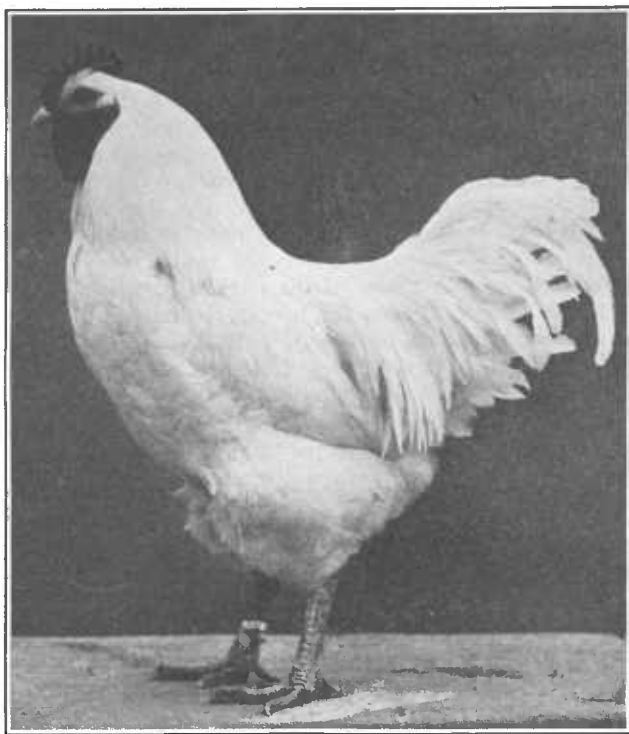
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STANDARD VARIETIES OF CHICKENS

I. THE AMERICAN CLASS

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Of the Animal Husbandry Division



FARMERS' BULLETIN 806

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Contribution from the Bureau of Animal Industry

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Washington, D. C.

April, 1917

THE American class includes the Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte, Java, Dominique, Rhode Island Red, and Buckeye.

The fowls of these breeds are commonly called general-purpose fowls, because they are not only good egg producers but their carcasses are also well suited for the table. They are therefore the breeds best suited for the general farm flock, and include some of the most popular and widely kept varieties of chickens. They are in good favor with the poultry packers on account of their table qualities.

All the American breeds lay brown-shelled eggs. They all have yellow skins and shanks free from feathers, which are desirable qualities for table fowl in this country.

In size they are intermediate between the smaller egg breeds, such as the Leghorns, and the larger meat breeds, such as the Brahmas. In temperament they are also intermediate, being less active than the egg breeds but more so than the meat breeds. They are fairly good foragers.

They mature earlier than the meat breeds, but not so quickly as the egg breeds.

They are sitters and make good mothers. Where they are kept, natural methods of incubation and brooding can therefore be used.

A general description of the different breeds and varieties of the American class is given in this bulletin.

STANDARD VARIETIES OF CHICKENS. I. THE AMERICAN CLASS.

CONTENTS.

	Page.		Page.
The kind of chicken the farmer wants.....	3	Breeds and varieties—Continued.	
Characteristics of the general-purpose breeds.	3	The Java.....	14
Breeds and varieties.....	4	The Dominique.....	15
The Plymouth Rock.....	5	The Rhode Island Red.....	17
The Wyandotte.....	11	The Buckeye.....	18

PRACTICALLY every farm in the United States keeps chickens. In the majority of instances the flock of poultry is kept merely as a side line, to utilize material which otherwise would go to waste, and to furnish eggs and meat for the farmer's table. At many seasons of the year the flock will produce a large surplus over what is needed for the farmer's own use, and this when sold yields a considerable income, sometimes sufficient to pay for the groceries and wholly or in part to clothe the family.

THE KIND OF CHICKEN THE FARMER WANTS.

To meet these demands the farmer therefore desires a breed or variety of chickens which are not only good layers, but also have size enough to provide suitable carcasses for the table. The breeds which meet these two demands are commonly called the general-purpose breeds, and in the main are those comprising the American class as given in the American Standard of Perfection. The Orpington, belonging to the English class, is also a well-known general-purpose breed in this country. The general-purpose breeds are undoubtedly the most popular breeds in the United States. Certain of these, namely, the Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds, and Orpingtons, compose the bulk of pure-bred poultry kept on the general farms, and their blood is evident in most of the farm flocks.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GENERAL-PURPOSE BREEDS.

In size the general-purpose breeds are intermediate between the meat breeds, such as the Brahmas, and the egg breeds, such as the Leghorns. They are of a much quieter temperament than the egg

breeds, and for that reason are more easily handled in confinement. They mature earlier than the meat breeds, but not so quickly as the lighter egg breeds. In activity and ability to "rustle" for a living they are again intermediate between the meat and the egg breeds, but are good foragers. Because of the fact that they fatten readily and are of a fair size they are very popular with the poultry packer, and

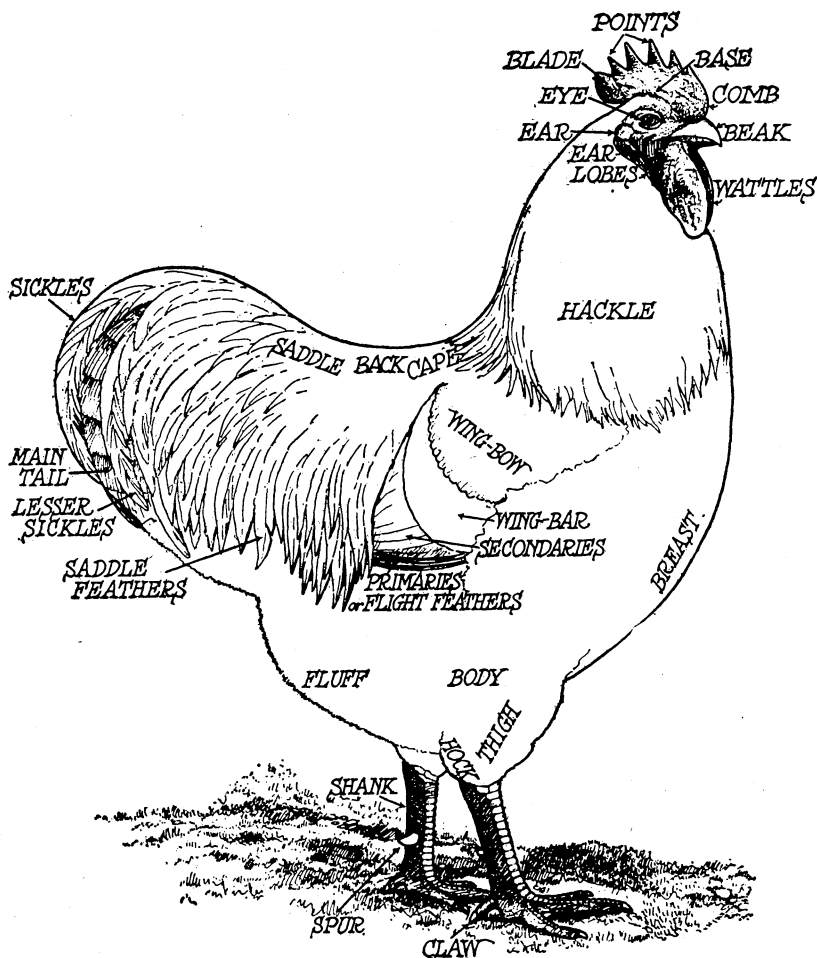


FIG. 1.—Glossary chart giving the names of the various sections of a male fowl.

sell to better advantage in those localities where the farmer is compelled to look to the poultry packer for a market for his fowls.

Because of the tendency for the general-purpose breeds to put on fat much more readily than the egg breeds, they must be fed more carefully when kept in confinement, otherwise there is a tendency for them to "break down behind," in other words, to accumulate an ex-

cessive amount of fat in the abdominal region. Where the fowls have free range, however, this trouble is not likely to occur.

They are sitters and make good mothers. This is an important consideration where the farmer keeps only a small flock and does not wish to invest money in hatching and brooding equipment. All of these birds are layers of brown eggs. In consequence, they are not as suitable for conditions where a premium is paid for white eggs; under such conditions, where large poultry farms have been established, the White Leghorn has come to be the most popular fowl.

All the American breeds are clean legged; that is, they have shanks free from feathers. They also have yellow legs and skin, except the Java, in which the legs are black or leaden blue and yellow. In the markets of the United States the former is a desirable point, as the demand is for yellow skin and legs in table fowls.

BREEDS AND VARIETIES.

The American class includes the following standard breeds and varieties:

BREEDS.	VARIETIES.
Plymouth Rock-----	Barred, White, Buff, Silver Penciled, Partridge, Columbian.
Wyandotte-----	White, Buff, Silver, Golden, Partridge, Silver Penciled, Columbian, Black.
Java-----	Black, Mottled.
Dominique.	
Rhode Island Red-----	Single Comb, Rose Comb.
Buckeye.	

In describing these breeds and varieties it is the intention to give only a general statement of their appearance and characteristics. For a description sufficiently detailed to enable one to breed exhibition specimens it will be necessary to refer to the American Standard of Perfection, a book published by the American Poultry Association, which is the guide by which all the poultry shows in the United States are judged.

THE PLYMOUTH ROCK.

The Plymouth Rock has been for years the most popular breed in the United States. The Barred Plymouth Rock was the original variety and was developed in the United States, various lines of blood being used in the making. It is probable that the Dominique, the Black Cochin, the Black Java, the Brahma, and the Pit Game were used for this purpose. The size and type or shape of all the varieties of Plymouth Rocks are supposed to be identical. In general the breed may be described as a good-sized, rather long-bodied

chicken, with fairly prominent breast and good depth of body, showing when dressed a well-rounded, compact carcass. This breed has a single comb and yellow legs, bill, and skin. The standard weight of cocks is $9\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; of hens, $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; cockerels, 8 pounds; pullets, 6 pounds. They are layers of good-sized, brown-shelled eggs, and are reputed especially as winter layers.

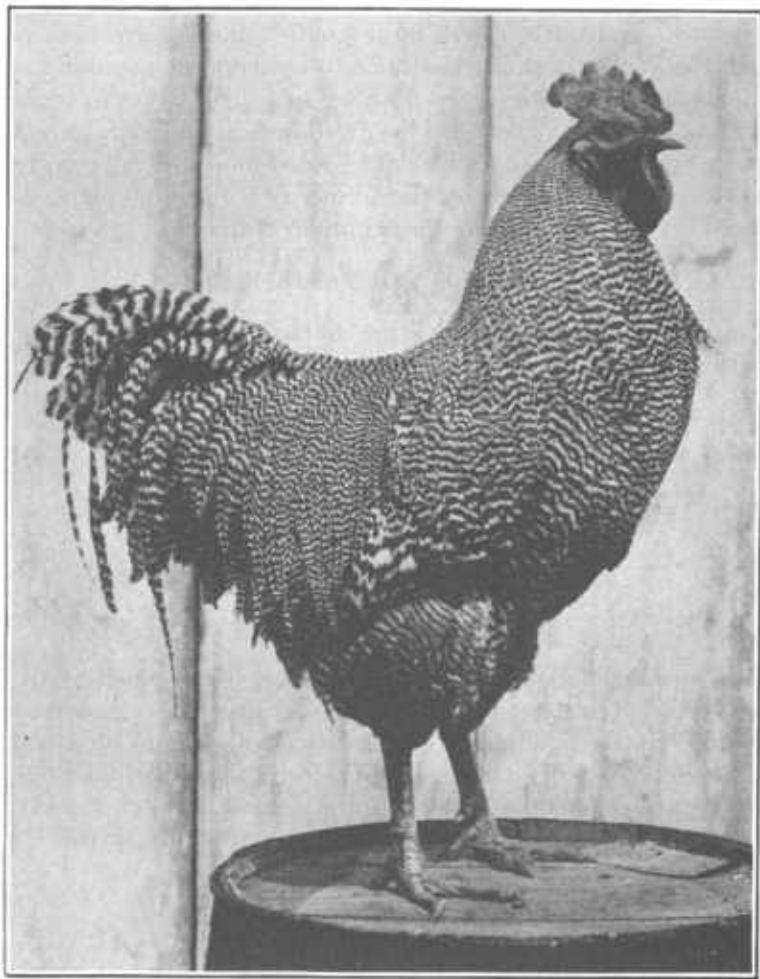


FIG. 2.—Exhibition or cockerel-bred Barred Plymouth Rock, male.

The Barred Plymouth Rock (figs. 2, 3, 4, and 5) is by far the most popular general-purpose or farm fowl. This variety has so long been a favorite with the general public that the barred color is generally associated with quality in table fowls. The Barred Plymouth Rock plumage is a grayish white, each feather of which is crossed by dark bars which are almost black. It is desired that these bars

should be as even in width, as parallel, as straight, and as well carried down to the skin as possible. Each feather should end with a narrow, dark tip. The barring in the hackle and saddle is narrower than in other sections. The alternating dark and light bars give a bluish cast or shade to the general color, which should be even throughout the surface. It is common for solid black feathers or feathers which are partly black to occur in practically all strains in this variety, but this should not be taken as a sign of impure breeding. Black spots



FIG. 3.—Cockerel-bred Barred Plymouth Rock, female.

are also common occurrences on the shanks, particularly in females, but this does not indicate impurity.

There is a decided tendency for the males of this variety to come lighter in color than the females, and for this reason breeders are usually obliged to resort to two separate matings, one for the production of males of standard or exhibition color and the other for the production of females of standard or exhibition color. This system of breeding is known as double mating. In mating for males of exhibition color a male of about standard color is used with medium

dark females, or those two or three shades darker than females of exhibition color, in which the barring is as distinct and as narrow as possible, showing a clear-cut line between the black and white bars. This mating is known as the cockerel mating, because it produces a greater percentage of exhibition or standard-colored males, while the females produced are too dark in color for exhibition, but are suitable for continuing this line of breeding. In mating for females of exhibition color, females of about standard color are used with a

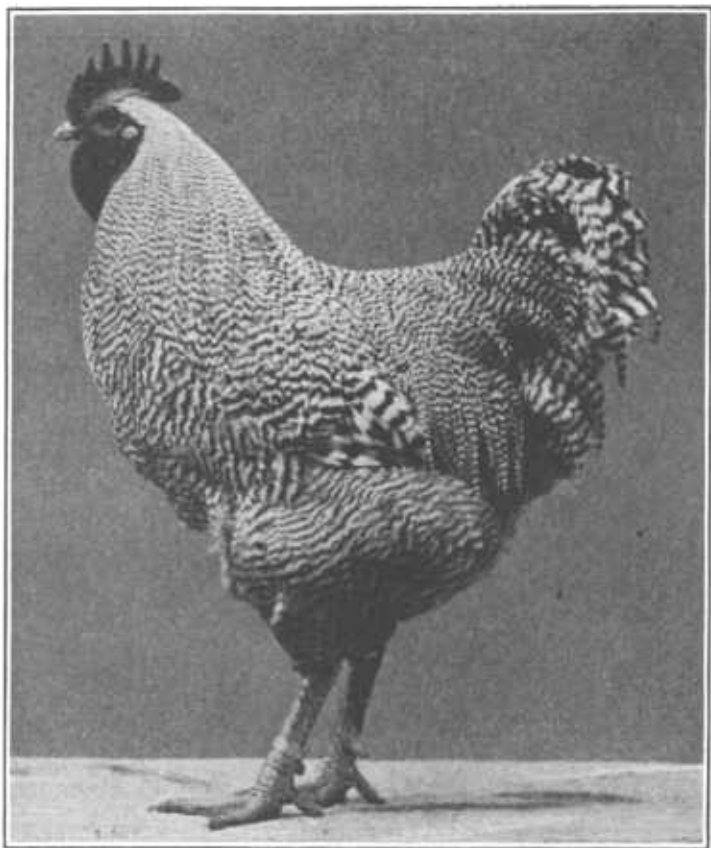


FIG. 4.—Pullet-bred Barred Plymouth Rock, male.

medium light male or one that is two or three shades lighter than males of exhibition color, but which shows distinct barring and as strong barring in the undercolor as can be obtained. This mating is known as the pullet mating, because it produces a greater percentage of females of exhibition color, while the males produced are too light for exhibition, but may be used to continue this line of breeding.

The White Plymouth Rock (see illustration on title page) is the second most popular variety of this breed. All the characteristics of

the White Plymouth Rock are supposed to be identical with those of the Barred Plymouth Rock except color. As a matter of fact the White Plymouth Rock tends to run somewhat larger in size, and the type is a little more uniform and a little better than that of the Barred Plymouth Rock. In color the White Plymouth Rock should be a pure white throughout, free from black ticking and from any brassiness or creaminess.

The Buff Plymouth Rock is distinguished from the other Rocks by the color alone, which should be an even shade of golden buff



FIG. 5.—Exhibition or pullet-bred Barred Plymouth Rock, female.

throughout. Shafting, or the presence of feathers having a shaft of different color from the rest of the feather, and mealiness, or the presence of feathers sprinkled with lighter color as though powdered with meal, are undesirable. As deep an undercolor of buff as it is possible to obtain is desirable. There is a great difference of opinion as to what constitutes desirable buff color, some favoring the lighter color, approaching lemon, while others favor a much darker buff, approaching red. The important point is to have the shade as even as possible over the entire surface.

The Silver Penciled Plymouth Rock is one of the new varieties. Its plumage is distinctive and very beautiful. In general, the plumage of the male consists of a silver white top color, extending over the shoulders and back, the hackle and saddle striped with black. The rest of the body plumage, including the main tail feathers and sickles, is black. The wings when folded show a bar of black extending across below the shoulder. Below this the wing shows white, due



FIG. 6.—Silver Wyandotte, male.

to the white on the outside of the secondaries. In the female the general trend of color is gray, with delicate, distinct, concentric penciling of dark on each feather except the hackle, each feather of which is silvery white with a black center, showing a slight gray penciling, and the main tail feathers, which are black, with the two top feathers showing some penciling. The color of the plumage is practically the same as that of the Dark Brahma.

The Partridge Plymouth Rock is also one of the newer varieties of this breed. The coloring of this variety is very attractive and is

practically the same as that of the Partridge Cochin and also of the Silver Penciled Plymouth Rock, except that the white of the Silver Penciled is replaced by red or reddish brown.

The Columbian Plymouth Rock, a variety of comparatively recent origin, is very attractive in coloring and has proved quite popular. In general the color is white, the hackle feathers being black with a narrow edging of white, and the main tail feathers black, the tail coverts being black with a distinct white lacing. The wings also carry some black on the primary and secondary feathers, which is

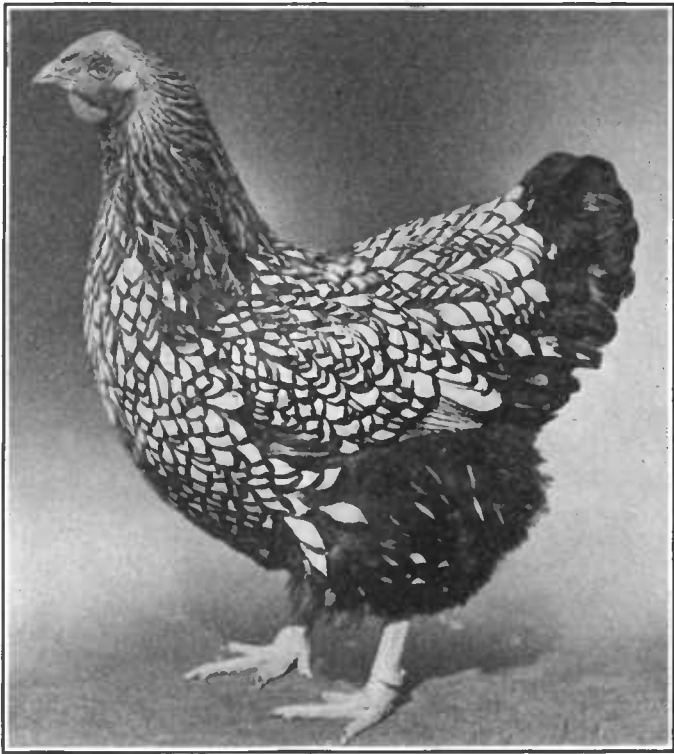


FIG. 7.—Silver Wyandotte, female.

almost hidden when the wings are folded. The color of this variety is practically the same as that of the Light Brahma.

THE WYANDOTTE.

The Wyandotte is a rose-comb breed and is characterized as a breed of curves. The body is comparatively round and set somewhat lower on the legs than the Plymouth Rock. It is inclined to be a looser feathered breed, and its general shape and character of feathering gives it an appearance of being somewhat short backed and short bodied. The Wyandotte is a breed which also was developed in the

United States, and has become very popular. The Silver Wyandotte was the original variety, and it is generally believed that the Dark Brahma, the Silver-Spangled Hamburg, and the Buff Cochin played a part in its origin. It is somewhat smaller than the Plymouth Rock, the standard weight being, for the cock, $8\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; hen, $6\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; cockerel, $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; pullet, $5\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. The hens are fairly prolific layers of brown eggs, are reputed to be good winter layers, and the

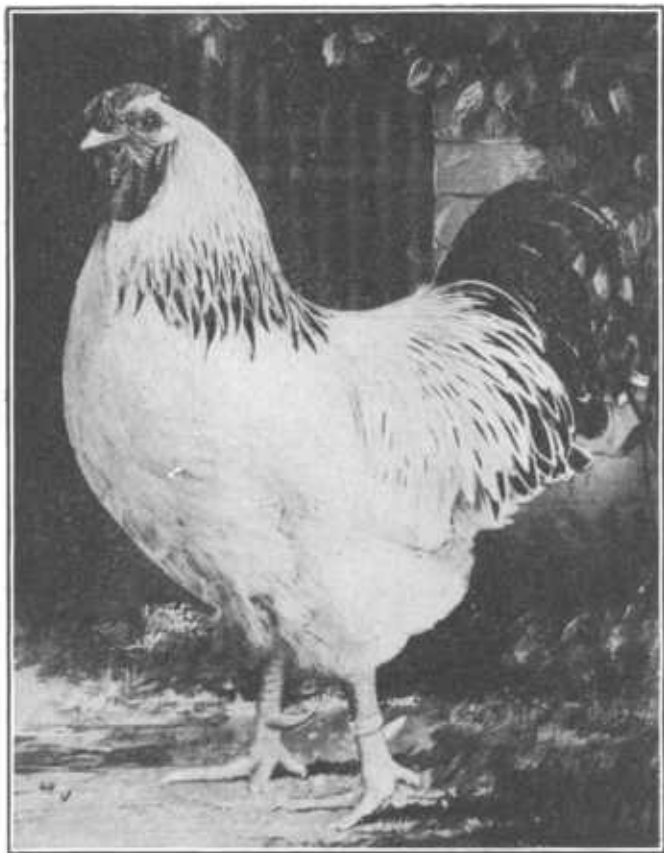


FIG. 8.—Columbian Wyandotte, male.

breed as a whole makes a fine table fowl. The young chickens do not tend to have the same leggy stage which is characteristic of the Rocks and most of the other general-purpose breeds, and the breed is therefore well suited for the production of broilers. Like the Plymouth Rock, all the varieties of this breed are yellow legged and yellow skinned, which adds to their market popularity.

In the Silver Wyandotte (figs. 6 and 7) the male has a silver-white back and saddle, the hackle and saddle feathers being striped with

black. The feathers of the body and breast are white, each laced with a black edge. The main tail feathers are black. The fluff is a slate color with some gray mixture. The color of the female shows white feathers laced with black over the entire body except the hackle, which is black laced with white, and the main tail feathers, which are black, and some black in the wings, while the fluff is slate mixed with gray. The color combination and the character of markings of the Silver Wyandotte make this a very attractive variety.

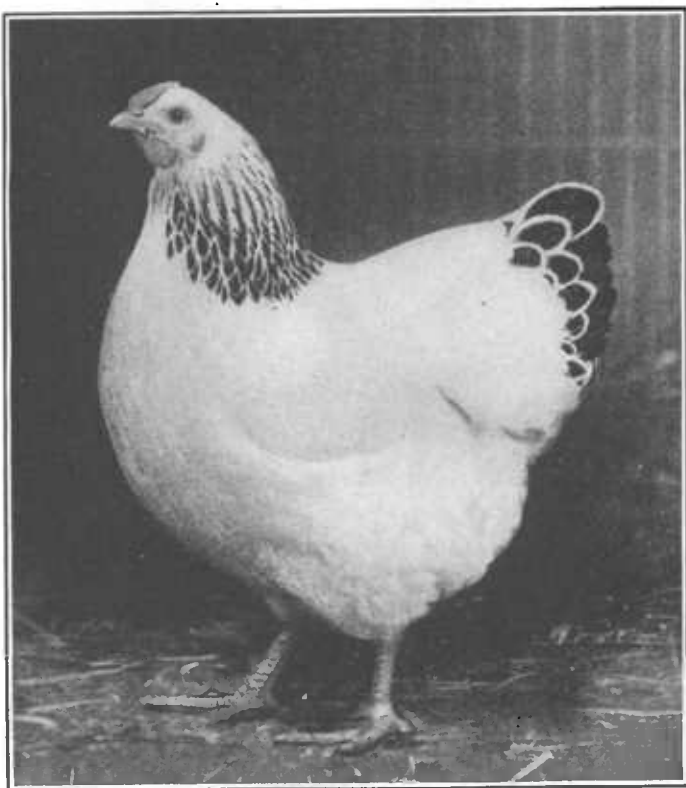


FIG. 9.—Columbian Wyandotte, female.

In the Golden Wyandotte the general color scheme is the same as in the Silver Wyandotte, except that the white of the Silver variety is replaced with red and reddish brown. Like the Silver Wyandotte, the color and markings of the Golden are very attractive.

The White Wyandotte is undoubtedly the most popular variety of this breed. The color is white throughout, and should be free from any brassiness or creaminess or black ticking.

In the Buff Wyandotte the color should be an even shade of buff throughout, being identical with that of the Buff Plymouth Rock.

In the Black Wyandotte the color is black in all sections, showing a greenish sheen, free from purple barring. The undercolor is lighter, somewhat on the slate order.

In the Partridge Wyandotte the color is the same as in the Partridge Plymouth Rock. In the Silver-Penciled and Columbian Wyandottes (figs. 8 and 9) the color is the same as in the corresponding varieties of the Plymouth Rocks.

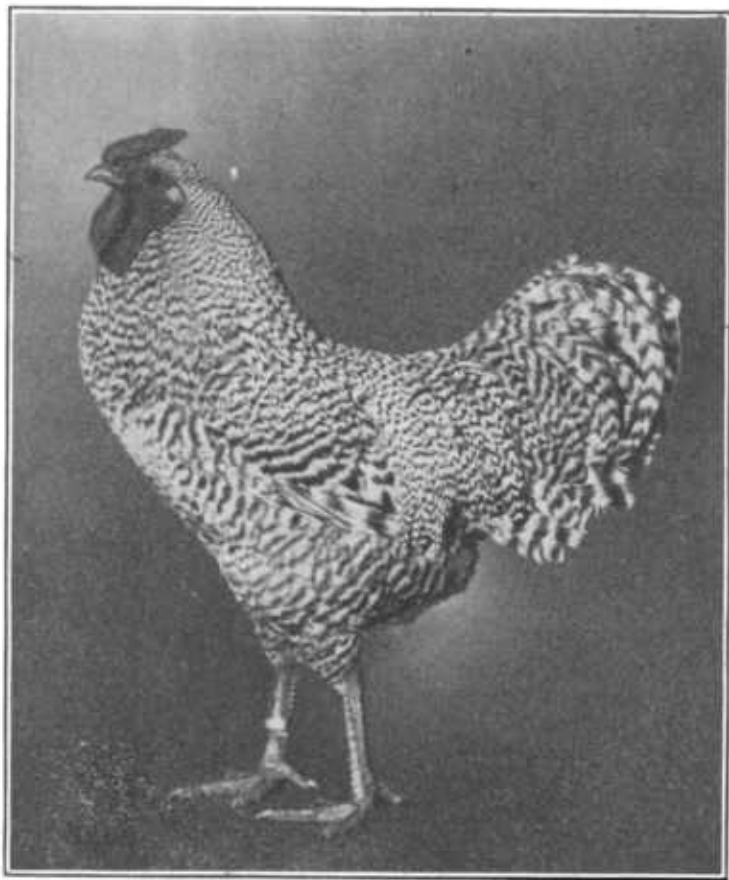


FIG. 10.—Dominique, male.

THE JAVA.

The Java is one of the oldest breeds developed in the United States. In general this fowl tends to be long in body and broad in back. The comb is single, and the legs of the Black variety are black, or black approaching yellow, while those of the Mottled variety are yellow and leaden blue. The color of the legs detracts somewhat from the fowl for market purposes. The skin, however, is yellow. The hens are good layers of brown-shelled eggs, and the fowls are suitable for

table purposes. This breed is not very commonly found at the present time. The standard weights are: Cock, $9\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; hen, $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; cockerel, 8 pounds; pullet, $6\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.

There are two varieties of Javas, the Black and the Mottled. The color of the Black Java is black throughout, with a greenish sheen on the surface plumage. Purple barring is undesirable. In the Mottled Java the plumage is a mottled black and white throughout, the black being more plentiful than the white. The undercolor of the Mottled Java is slaty.

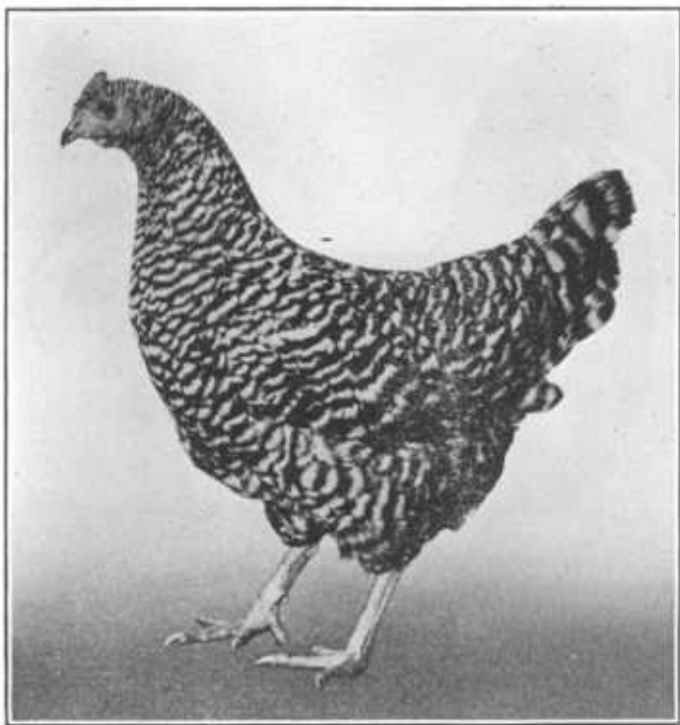


FIG. 11.—Dominique, female.

THE DOMINIQUE.

The Dominique (figs. 10 and 11) is also one of the oldest of the American breeds. The Dominique color is associated in the minds of people throughout the country with the barnyard fowl and is frequently confused with the Barred Plymouth Rock color. The Dominique is somewhat smaller and somewhat slighter in body, with a tail somewhat longer and sickles more prominent, than the other American breeds. This breed has a rose comb and yellow legs and skin. The hens lay brown-shelled eggs and are good table fowls, although somewhat smaller than the other general-purpose breeds. The stand-

ard weights for this breed are: Cock, 7 pounds; hen, 5 pounds; cockerel, 6 pounds; pullet, 4 pounds. The pure-bred Dominique is not extensively kept at the present time in the United States.

In color of plumage the Dominique has a general bluish or slaty cast, the feathers in all sections being barred throughout with alternate, rather irregular, dark and light bars. The markings somewhat

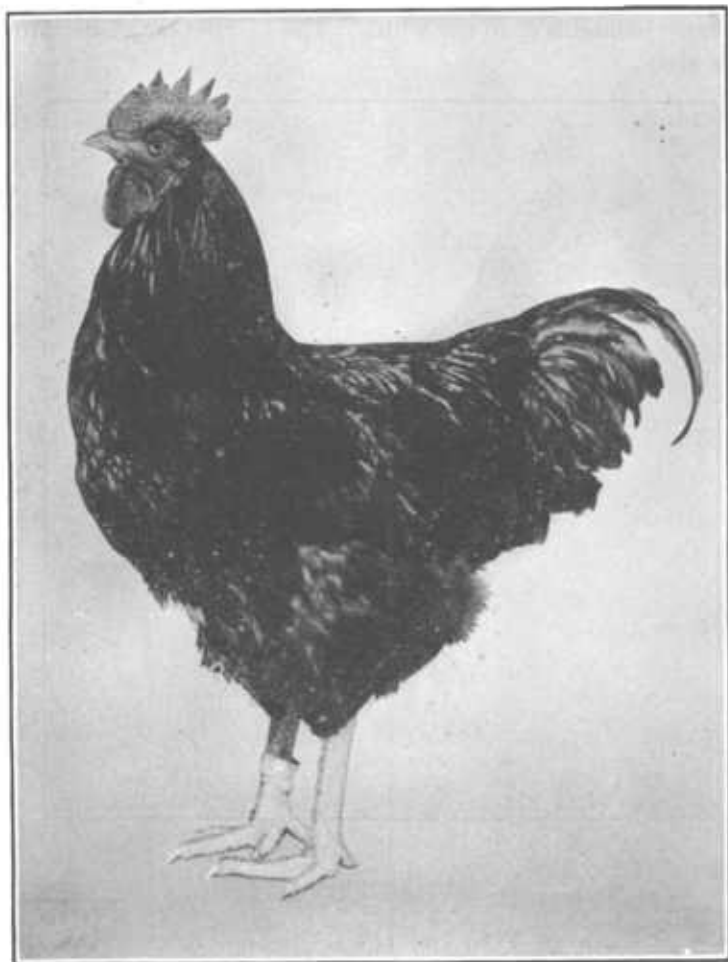


FIG. 12.—Single-comb Rhode Island Red, male.

resemble those of the Barred Plymouth Rock, but are less distinct, and lack the clean-cut character of the Plymouth Rock barring. Like the Barred Plymouth Rock, each feather should end with a dark tip. The Dominique male may be, and often is, one or two shades lighter than the female. Slate undercolor occurs throughout.

THE RHODE ISLAND RED.

The Rhode Island Red (figs. 12 and 13) is one of the newer breeds which have been developed in this country. At the present time it bears an excellent reputation among the farmers and is kept very extensively throughout the farming districts. The breed originated in Rhode Island, where it was developed by the farmers engaged in poultry raising. The Malay, Buff Cochins, Buff Leghorns, and Wyandottes are said to have been used in its development.

In type the Rhode Island Red has a rather long, rectangular body and is somewhat rangier in appearance than the Plymouth Rock or

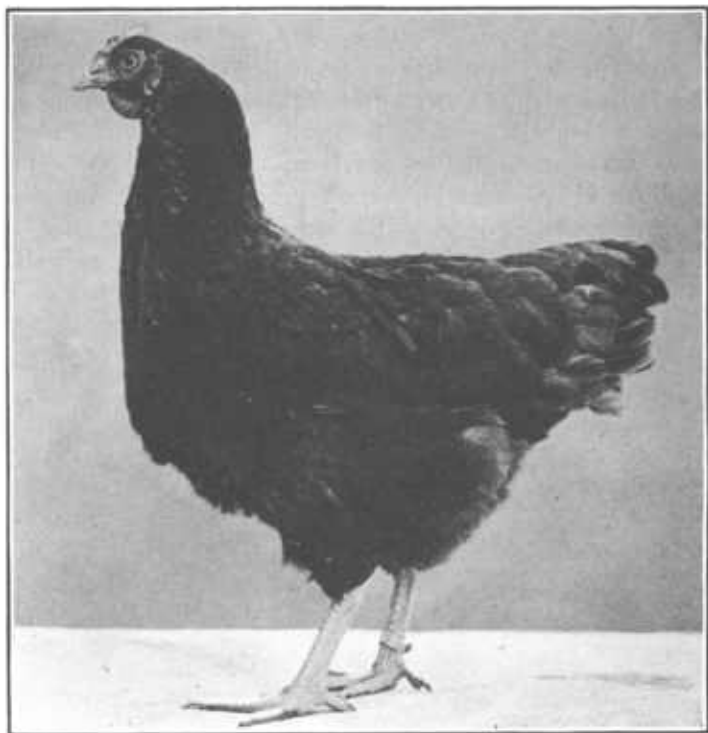


FIG. 13.—Rhode Island Red, female.

the Wyandotte. The hens are prolific layers of brown-shelled eggs, and the breed makes a very suitable table fowl, having yellow legs and yellow skin. The Rhode Island Reds have enjoyed an excellent reputation for hardiness, which, in the main, they have well deserved. The standard weights for this breed are: Cock, $8\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; hen, $6\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; cockerel, $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; pullet, 5 pounds.

There are two varieties of the Rhode Island Red which are identical in color and type, but one of which has a single comb and the other a rose comb.

In color the Rhode Island Red is a rich, dark red, approaching a mahogany. It is desired to have this color as even as possible over the entire surface. There is a tendency, however, for the hackle and the lower part of the saddle of the male to be lighter in color than the back and shoulders. The main tail feathers in both sexes are black, and the wings also show some black. In the hackle of the female there is also a slight ticking of black. The undercolor of all sections should be red, and free from a dark or slaty appearance, which is known as smut.

THE BUCKEYE.

The Buckeyes are an American breed of comparatively recent origin. In type they approach somewhat to the Cornish, being erect and broad-breasted. The standard weights are: Cock, 9 pounds; hen, 6½ pounds; cockerel, 8 pounds; pullet, 5½ pounds. This breed has a pea comb, which doubtless comes from the Cornish blood used in originating it. The hens lay brown eggs. In color Buckeyes are mahogany bay, which is slightly darker on the wing bows of the males. The flight and tail feathers often carry black as well. The undercolor should be red, except in the back, where a bar of slate is desired.

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